

Local Vietnam Veteran Calls on President to Designate National Day of Recognition

Washington, DC –Congresswoman Linda Sánchez (CA-39) today joined U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) to lead Senate and House colleagues of both parties in sending a letter to President Obama requesting that he designate March 29 as “National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.” This proclamation would honor Vietnam veterans each year on the date the last American combat forces withdrew from Vietnam, according to the terms of the Treaty of Paris.

“We owe it to the brave men and women who honorably served our country to honor them for their sacrifice,” Congresswoman Sanchez said. **“Unfortunately, many Vietnam veterans came home to harsh ridicule and criticism, instead of the warm embrace and the proper homecoming they deserved. As someone who has introduced ‘Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day’ legislation each Congress since I came to Washington, I hope that President Obama fixes this injustice and gives these veterans long overdue recognition by establishing an annual ‘National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.’”**

“Each and every American service member who sacrifices for our country deserves to be welcomed home by a grateful nation,” Senator Boxer said. **“Establishing a national day of recognition for veterans of the Vietnam War will honor their service and show the deep gratitude our nation feels for these brave men and women.”**

In their letter, the Senators and Representatives point out that due to contentious public debate on U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, returning veterans were denied appropriate recognition for their service. They wrote, “A Presidential proclamation would officially designate a ‘National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day’ and ensure that all Americans remember and honor the service of these brave men and women.”

Congresswoman Sánchez, a member of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, has introduced a “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day” resolution every Congress since she was elected in 2002. The resolution has always received broad bipartisan support. A Presidential proclamation declaring this a national day of observance would formalize this fitting tribute to these brave and honorable men and women.

José Ramos, a Vietnam veteran from Whittier and founder of Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day (WHVVD), has worked tirelessly to recognize his fellow veterans. Congresswoman Sánchez began her work to honor Vietnam veterans in 2003, following a meeting with Ramos.

“The men and women who served with courage and dignity during the Vietnam War have waited patiently for the country they love, to honor their service,” said Ramos. **“We failed to do this when they left Vietnam. We must not fail them again before they leave this world. The time to honor our Vietnam Veterans, Mr. President, is now, today.”**

In addition to Boxer and Sanchez, the letter is signed by Senators Max Baucus (D-MT), Richard Burr (R-NC), Thad Cochran (R-MS), Kent Conrad (D-ND), James M. Inhofe (R-OK), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Ben Nelson (D-NE), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Bernard Sanders (I-VT), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Mark Udall (D-CO), Mike Johanns (R-NE), Mark Begich (D-AK), Scott P. Brown (R-MA), Joe Manchin III (D-WV), John Boozman (R-AR) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Representatives Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Michael Grimm (R-NY), Betty Sutton (D-OH), Frederica Wilson (D-FL), John Larson (D-CT), Yvette Clarke (D-NY), Silvestre Reyes (D-TX), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Joe Donnelly (D-IN), Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), Mark Critz (D-PA), Leonard Boswell (D-IA), Robert Brady (D-PA), Gwen Moore (D-WI), Tim Bishop (D-NY), Shelley Berkley (D-NV), Jay Inslee (D-WA), Bob Filner (D-CA), Nita Lowey (D-NY), Joe Courtney (D-CT), Allyson Schwartz (D-PA), Ed Perlmutter (D-CO), Joe Crowley (D-NY), John Yarmuth (D-KY), Michael Capuano (D-MA), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Bill Pascrell (D-NJ), Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Chaka Fattah (D-PA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Charlie Gonzalez (D-TX), Brian Higgins (D-NY), Lloyd Doggett (D-TX), Bill Owens (D-NY), Mike Thompson (D-CA), Mike Quigley (D-IL), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Peter Welch (D-VT), Tim Ryan (D-OH) and Mike Michaud (D-ME).

The full text of the letter is below:

May 26, 2011

The President

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Memorial Day approaches, we respectfully request that you designate March 29 as “National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day” to honor members of the United States Armed Forces who served during the Vietnam War. We believe a designation at this time would be a fitting tribute to all who served during the Vietnam War, including the more than 58,000 Americans who gave their lives in service to our country.

We appreciate your commitment to our veterans and your tireless work to ensure that our newest veterans receive the recognition, benefits and care they deserve from a grateful nation. But we must also remember the men and women who bravely and faithfully served during the Vietnam War. Upon their return home, Vietnam veterans were caught in the crossfire of public debate about our country’s involvement in the conflict. As a result, they were denied appropriate recognition and honor for their service.

Over the past four years, Congress has worked to right this wrong and provide a proper homecoming for our Vietnam veterans. Beginning in 2007, bipartisan resolutions have passed unanimously in the House of Representatives and the Senate expressing support for the designation of a “National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.” A Presidential proclamation would officially designate a “National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day” and ensure that all Americans remember and honor the service of these brave men and women. We believe that March 29 would be an appropriate date for this observance because it marks the date that the United States completed the withdrawal of all combat troops from Vietnam.

Vietnam veterans and their families deserve our gratitude for their countless sacrifices. In the words of President John F. Kennedy, “A nation reveals itself not only by the citizens it produces,

but also by the citizens it honors, the citizens it remembers.” Designating March 29 as an annual “National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day” would be an important step toward recognizing our Vietnam veterans as the heroes they are and giving them a long overdue welcome home.

Thank you for your attention to this important request. We look forward to your prompt reply.

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